

Wartime Associated Heritage

An interpretation source for establishing wartime associations for
National Trust Properties



NATIONAL TRUST



National Trusts of Australia

Canberra

2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

National Trusts of Australia (NTA) gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Department of the Environment National Trusts Partnership Program (NTPP).

The NTA recognizes the immense contributions made by the communities of Australia during the periods of the First and Second World Wars of the 20th Century. The tragedies and hardships they endured and the loyalties and dedication to a cause they made marks this period as unique in Australia's history. They, along with those who served overseas and in combat should never go unremembered.

Dr Peter Dowling
National Heritage Officer
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2015

I ask you to reconcile yourselves to a season of austerity, to make your habits of life conform to those of the fighting forces. The civil population can learn to discipline itself; it can learn to go without.

(John Curtin, August 1942)

Introduction

The two World Wars of the twentieth century touched the lives of almost all Australians in many different ways. Australia's involvement in the conflict of the First World War lasted from July 1914 to the Armistice of November 1918 a total of 4 years and 14 weeks. Involvement in the Second World War was even longer, between September 1939 and September 1945, a total of 6 years. Following each of the conflicts there were long years of economic and social recovery felt by all Australians. It would not be incongruous to say that for a period amounting to almost half of the 20th Century Australian communities endured immense disruption to their lives caused by the actual conflicts of the wars and the economic recoveries following them. Included in this period was the Great Depression, felt all around the world from 1929 to 1930 and the subsequent long economic and social recovery. The 20th Century was indeed characterised as a time of extreme hardship felt at all levels of government, industry and society throughout Australia.

Over 400,000 men enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during the First World War of whom 330,000 left Australia for overseas service. Along with the men, almost 5,000 women went overseas with the Australian Army Nursing Service, the Red Cross and the Queen Alexandra nursing units. During the Second World War approximately 576,000 Australians served overseas. Of these, some 5,000 women served as nurses in the Middle East, Mediterranean, Asia, the Pacific and Britain.

Most of those who stayed at home threw themselves into extra activities during the days and evenings to support the war related activities in whatever way they could, while a smaller minority during each war actively protested against the war and the country's involvement. According to historian Ken Inglis in his book *Sacred Places*¹, one in two families in Australia suffered loss and many had relatives and friends overseas, especially in Britain, linking these shared experiences of loss of extended family members.

Whatever the case, either active participation, home support for the wars or protest against them, war was an omnipresent shadow that hung over almost every family household in Australia. The historical impact of these 20th Century wars is today physically portrayed in almost every village, town and city throughout Australia in the form of local monuments to those who served and indelibly imprinted on the Australian psyche in the form of service organisations and commemorative events and ceremonies particularly on Anzac Day (April 25th) and Armistices Day (November 11th). Even today in the first decades of the 21st Century, the impact and commemoration of Australia's involvement in the world wars was firmly reiterated when over 120,000 people attended the 100 year anniversary of the 1915 Gallipoli landings at the dawn service outside the Australian War Memorial on a very cold April morning. The biggest gathering of people Canberra has seen.

National Trust Properties and the people

The National Trust owns and/or manages over three hundred properties across Australia, many of them houses relating to our built architectural heritage and the people who lived in them. The properties range from grand mansions and estates such as Rippon Lea and Como in Melbourne through to smaller houses such as Woodbridge in Perth and Runnymede in Hobart. The people who lived in them ranged from the wealthy, elite families in the higher levels of society who employed a number of staff to manage their estates, to those families of more humble means who often struggled to make a home for their families. However, one thing they had in common in the 20th Century, no matter what level of society they occupied, was most did not escape the impact of the two world wars. The impacts and responses to the conflicts would have varied from the ultimate tragedy of losing a loved one, to caring for the returned and wounded or to just getting 'down to it' and helping out with the war effort from home as best they could.

These people and the experiences they had relating to the world wars make up a significant part of the history of the property they occupied and the wider history of Australia. Collectively, their experiences make up the fabric of the society and the times they lived through. Their experiences and actions have influenced our society today.

Owning many properties across Australia, the National Trust has a unique opportunity to delve into the lives of these people during the war years and the years following the conflicts. These experiences can contribute in a highly significant and fascinating way to the interpretation programmes for the properties. In the forthcoming years of this current century we will be continually reminded of the 100 year anniversaries of battles Australians fought in the two wars and the losses the nation endured in the dead and wounded. But that is not the full story of the war years. Examining the lives of the people who lived in the National Trust houses and on the properties will, whether they served in the various arms of the forces or stayed behind to be part of the 'home front', will add another more personal, layer to the fabric of those times.

In many cases, these war-time stories have not been teased out and told as part of the interpretation programmes for the National Trust properties. In other cases they are beginning to be examined and incorporated into interpretation programmes. One such case is the recent (2014) research done on the Bayly family of Runnymede in Hobart². But, because of the impact the war years and subsequent social and economic recovery periods had on the communities of Australia during the 20th Century, in many cases these stories will associated with the people who lived in the properties will be there in the records and archives, hidden but detectable.

This paper aims at giving those managers and interpreters of National Trust properties a start at considering what war-time stories may be associated with the properties and a brain-storm approach on how the stories may be teased out from the lives of the people who lived or who were associated with the properties.

The Home Fronts

During the First and Second World Wars the Australians at home did not suffer anything like the miseries, starvation, morbidity, mortality, loss of homes and inflicted privations that many civilian populations in other parts of the world endured. But nevertheless, the two wars did have a profound affect on the lives and activities on the home front.

During the First World War there was no direct threat to Australians at home. While the first actions in which Australians took part were in New Guinea close to the mainland, and the threat to shipping by German armed raiders at sea was present, there was no direct attack on Australian soil. However, during the Second World War Australia experienced direct attacks by Japanese submarines in Sydney Harbour and aircraft in a series of air raids on the northern coastlines. Even though there was no firm evidence for a Japanese invasion of the Australian mainland during the war, these attacks and the Japanese advances into the South Pacific, created fear and uncertainty among Australians at home. Many people feared an invasion was a strong possibility.

The Australian Government implemented a wide range of measures in preparedness for a situation of total war and national security. The urgent need was seen to increase available manpower for the services to join the conflicts overseas, put in place defensive forces on homeland soil, and to increase munitions production and war-related infrastructures. Under the shadows of national danger to Australia, the Government in both World Wars increasingly marshalled control of industrial production and encouraged, and in some cases curtailed, Australians to give up individual rights and activities. 'Austerity' in all things was a continuous catch cry during the Second World War, as it was during the First World War.

In both the First and Second World Wars the Commonwealth Government passed National Security Acts to direct the war efforts. These Acts imposed a large number of new controls over people's lives. For example, this was done through the authority of the War Precautions Act 1914 during the First World War and the National Security Act of 1939 for the Second World War. These Acts did two major things: they effectively overrode the Constitution for the duration of the wars - giving the Commonwealth power to make laws in areas where it did not have that power under the Constitution; and effectively overrode the power of Parliament by giving the Government power to make regulations, that is, laws that required only the signatures of some ministers and the Governor-General.

During the Second World War the Curtin Government imposed legislative restrictions on the people, which included:

- The reduction of the Christmas - New Year holiday period to three days;
- The restriction of weekday sporting events;
- Blackouts and brownouts in cities and coastal areas;
- Daylight saving;
- Increased call-ups of the Militia;
- The issue of personal identity cards;
- Increased enlistment of women into the auxiliary forces;

- Regulations allowing strikers to be drafted into the Army or into the Army Labour Corps;
- The fixing of profit margins in industry;
- Restrictions on the costs allowed for building or renovations;
- The setting of some women's pay rates at near-male levels;
- Internment of members of the Australia First organisation;
- Controls on the cost of dresses;
- The rationing of clothing, footwear, tea, butter and sugar;
- The banning of the Communist Party, and the Australia First Movement for opposition to the war;
- The formation of a Women's Land Army;
- The pegging of prices; and
- The prosecution of conscientious objectors, and the imprisoning of some of them.

The Government gave themselves the power to:

- To exempt a person from service or prohibit their enlistment to be retained in reserved occupations related to the war effort
- Prevent employers from engaging labour not authorised by the directorate
- Restrict the right of employees to engage in the employment of their choice
- Prevent employees from leaving their employment
- Restrict the right of the employer to dismiss his employees
- To direct any person to leave one employment and engage in another
- And compel individuals to register and provide information about themselves.³

People were expected to work harder, longer hours, and avoid luxuries and waste. In both the World Wars most of the people saw these measures as a necessary sense of duty - people pulling together, willing to forsake the comforts of life and home, rolling up their sleeves and participating in the 'War Effort' either by joining a wide-variety of organisations or by simply producing comforts for those serving overseas while at home in the evenings. Knitting socks, scarves, balaclavas and vests, or putting together food parcels for the men and women serving overseas was a popular home activity for many women.

Children were encouraged to participate in the war effort at school and at home. News of the war (often sanitised for public consumption) was read out at school assemblies and particular actions of former school students were emphasised. Children were given lesson times to write letters to those serving overseas and to send photographs and drawings. Those serving away appreciated any message from home. Children were involved in fairs and fetes organised by the schools, churches and clubs. Children also raised money by doing jobs for neighbours and in country areas some passed on the profits they made from selling rabbit and kangaroo pelts. Almost any activity that could help out by making goods, providing support or raising funds to support the war effort was tried.

Food, clothing and petrol were rationed by Government legislation. The broad reasoning behind the introduction of rationing was to ensure the equitable distribution of food and clothing. It was also hoped that a cut on consumer spending would lead to an increase in savings, which in turn could be invested in war loans. Australians, however, were never as short of food and clothing nor as heavily rationed as civilians in the United Kingdom or for that matter those in Germany where food shortages in particular became very severe in the

middle and last periods of both World Wars. Petrol rationing for motor-vehicle use during the First World War was limited but during the Second World War it was rigorously enforced for both commercial and private sector use.

But despite these restrictions which impacted on all Australians, complying to them was seen as being patriotic, a way of helping, an all-in effort by those at home to give up their time and efforts to help out in anyway they could.

What were the effects on the lives of the people who lived in the properties? What evidence is there available to understand these restrictions on the families?

The family members who served at home –

- Land Army,
- Women in the workforce
- Home defence units,
- Militia units,
- Medical units
- Aid organisations
- Support groups
- Protest groups
- Internments
- The reporting of the media
- The casualty lists
- The missing in action lists
- The long wait for news of a loved one

Sources:

- Records held at Australian War Memorial
- Records held at National Archives of Australia
- State and Territory Archives
- National Library of Australia
- State and Territory Libraries
- Letters, diaries etc. from those who served held in private and family collections
- Memorabilia collected by those who served held on the property or in family collections related to the property.
- Letters written to those serving from those at home.
- Memorabilia collected by those who stayed at home, held on the property or in family collections related to the property.

Home front bereavement

The sense of loss and deep concern felt by families during the two World Wars should not only be seen in those who had loved ones killed or returned wounded and permanently incapacitated although these were severe enough on families, the sense of loss and anxiety began for many families when their men or women joined up and left for overseas service.⁴ For many parents just seeing their sons and daughters off from the ports around Australia was the beginning of their loss. There would be long periods when they did not know the fate of their sons and daughters.

Many of the parents joined or participated in a patriotic society or bereaved relatives' organisation. Such organisations included the Soldiers' Widows and Widowed Mothers Association, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Womenfolk Association, the Friendly Union of Soldiers' Wives Mothers and Sisters, and the Sailors' and Soldiers' Fathers Association. The social activities and mutual support offered by these organisations alleviated the absence and in the worst cases the death of sons and daughters serving abroad. Mothers' and women's organisations held their meetings by day and engaged in activities such as knitting and preparing 'comforts' to be sent overseas, while the male organisations generally held their meetings in the evenings and organised speeches, patriotic songs, smoked cigars and pipes in 'smoke socials' and organised articles for publication in the organisations' newsletters. The purpose behind these organisations was mutual support for members and as a vehicle to express their patriotism for Australia and its war effort. Some of the organisations devised badges signifying membership and the sacrifice of a son or daughter thus building a fraternity of grieving mothers and fathers. The organisations were usually formed and organized from middle-class family men and women who could give their time and resources to the organisations. They would often assist the newly war widows, other grieving parents and with repatriation of wounded returned home.

Women at home.

'Enthusiasm for war may have been a necessary emotion for Australia's clergy and a natural one for her schoolchildren; the response of Australian women was less inevitable.'
(McKernan 2014 p.65.)

During Australia's involvements in conflict, particularly the two World Wars, there were hundreds of organisations formed to raise funds and to provide support for the men and women who were serving overseas and on the home front. Many of them were instigated, managed and operated by women who saw a need, whether through patriotism for their country or through a maternalistic desire to provide direct aid to those leaving for war, serving in conflict, those who had returned home and the families who had been affected by the conflicts. Other organisations performed essential work to enable the nation to focus its financial efforts and commitments to the conflict at hand.

At the outbreak of the First World War far fewer women than men were in employment and those that were tended to be in lower-paid occupations. Women's main role tended to be in the home caring and providing for the working male and children. In many cases both in government and small and large corporate business where women were employed the tendency was for unmarried women to be retained until they were married. It was

considered by society that the employment of a married women precluded a younger and unmarried from being able to obtain a job and an income. Once married women were expected to leave the workforce. In fact this attitude continued through both World wars up until in the 1960s.

These social mores prevailed during the First World War even when approximately 500,000 men either enlisted or were withdrawn from the peacetime workforce to work in war related industries. Even though women's contributions to the workforce rose from around 24 per cent of the total workforce in 1914 to just 37 per cent in 1918 at the end of the war the jobs they held were largely in the traditional positions as before; secretarial, administration, education, nursing and retail. Unions (in almost all cases administered by males) were unwilling to allow women to join the workforce in greater numbers, particularly in jobs that had been traditionally filled by males, as they feared that this would lower the wages and take up positions, which would be for returning service men. Many women sought to become involved in war-related activities such as cooks, stretcher-bearers, motor drivers, interpreters, and in munitions manufacturing but were excluded by government policy.

But many women of all ages and marital status were determined through a sense of patriotism and a desire to help directly or indirectly with the war effort. Those who were already in nursing and medical positions were to a large degree the exceptions as these were vital occupations related to the war effort and traditionally female. Many skilled nurses volunteered their services in the Royal Australian Army Nursing Service (RANS), others decided on a career in nursing and either found their way in the RANS or into other civilian organised nursing and health services.

A number of women's organisations became involved and more active during the First World War including the Australian Women's National League, the Australian Red Cross, the Country Women's Association, the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), the Australian Women's Service Corps and the Women's Peace Army. Others formed organisations of a more militant nature with the aim of providing a home-front defence force and to assist the military at home. While they had good intentions, were often trained by serving personnel, and no doubt would have been capable of carrying out their self-assigned roles, they were largely short-lived and were not supported by the government and the defence force. Many women were also actively involved in encouraging (and in some cases demanding) men to enlist and were used in pro-enlistment campaigns. Other women, however, were against the whole war and actively formed anti-enlistment and anti- conscription groups – their argument and concerns were against sending young men, particularly, sons, husbands and brothers to fight a war on the other side of the world.



We began hearing a lot about 'the war effort' and people stopped saying the war would be over in six months, or even a year. Whenever I came home from school, the house was full of women clicking knitting needles and manipulating dark wool, and making huge quantities of socks, vests, mittens and mufflers, as well as sewing pyjamas and shirts. Mum ran Red Cross classes with first aid and bandage rolling ... Mum, who was a leading light in the CWA (Country Women's Association) as well as the Red Cross, spent more and more of her time on the war effort... Nora Pennington, the good

little girl who had written the composition about Gallipoli, was the school's champion sock knitter. At lunchtime and recess she sat with her ankles neatly crossed and her boots buttoned, turning the heels of the socks very prettily. She eventually won the district record for the number of socks, mufflers, mittens and balaclava helmets knitted by anybody under the age of thirteen; her father made sure that the news reached the front page of his paper, with the heading 'LITTLE NORA DOES HER BIT'. The rest of us longed to grab her knitting, rip the stitches out and snarl the wool for her.⁵

The Red Cross

The Red Cross was inaugurated in 1914 in Australia as an Australian branch of the British organization. In a matter of three months in NSW for example there were 88 city suburban branches and 250 country branches where none had existed before. (McKernan p.68). Joining the Red Cross became the principle focus of women's activity throughout both wars and the Red Cross Society had branches in most city suburbs and country towns.

Voluntary workers were more freely available in the middle-class members of society than in the working-class suburbs. Indeed given the establishment of the Red Cross with its patronage from Governors General and their wives there was most likely a hesitation for the women from the working class families to join such a perceived elite organisation. They just did not have the time to give from family day to day family existence. And in the country there was the added problem of transport to attend regular meetings in town centres. However, there would have been cases where middle class women were able to utilise the work of their servants and staff by giving them time and materials to knit and sew garments which were then donated to Red Cross organisations by the 'Lady of the House'.

As the war progressed those women who did not become involved in the red cross often took to the suburban and country streets to sell buttons, raise money, conduct fairs the proceeds of which often went to the civilian refugees in France, Belgium, Poland, Serbia etc. who found themselves displaced by the conflict. A huge proliferation of organisations arose quickly across Australia most of which were instigated and organized by women.

But, those who threw themselves into voluntary aid organizations saw the 'boys' of the AIF as their main focus. While those who were serving overseas were comparatively well paid and had their basic needs supplied by the service, there was the high values they put on the luxury items received in packages from home that boosted and often maintained moral and

were links back to 'home' that in many ways enabled the men and women abroad to face the daily horrors of the war. Tobacco, tea, food items such as tins of condensed milk, cakes, biscuits, puddings, newspapers and magazines, woollen socks, caps, gloves, cotton and linen shirts were the main items purchased from collections, packaged up and sent to the Front.

From small and independent beginnings these fund raising bodies grew in size eventually amalgamating and reorganizing their efforts to form the Australian Comforts Fund (ACF) in 1916. To a degree it rivalled the Red Cross organisations with its more middleclass directions but the ACF gave the opportunity for those women from the working class suburbs and towns the opportunity for them to commit what time and effort they had to spare to the cause of aiding those abroad. To contribute in this even if the contribution was small it was a patriotic commitment. These organisations also allowed children to personally commit by raising funds during and after school or in the evenings knitting and sewing under the supervision of their parents. Patriotic duty was a family experience.

The Purple Cross Service

The Purple Cross Service or Society was established soon after the outbreak of the First World War. The role of the society was to raise funds for the supply of equipment and veterinary treatment of horses for the Light Horse Brigades. In Victoria it was originally the *Troop Horse Fund*. The Service was generally made up of women who saw a need to alleviate the sufferings of horses, which were shipped overseas and used in combat. In the first year of the war the women of the Victorian service had raised £415 from public donations and activities. Most of this amount was spent in 'buying materials for bandages and "comforts" for troop horses during the voyage overseas. Twenty-two of the transport ships carrying the horses were provided with supplies of 'oatmeal, linseed meal, salt, molascuit (when available), ponltice boots, &c., &c.'

In 1971 the Purple Cross Society was disbanded but in 1993 the RSPCA established a Purple Cross Award to recognise the deeds of animals that have shown outstanding bravery and fortitude in the service of humans.⁶

Cheer-Up Societies

Following the home support for the first AIF contingent prior to their leaving Australia, there was a much reduced enthusiasm and support for the following contingents. In many cases there was little or no public send offs or public response. This was noticed, particularly in South Australia when a few women who had made a visit to the Morphettville camp and noticed that the soldiers had received very few 'delicacies and comforts' from the public. This was an impetus to form a special group the 'Cheer-Up Society' to 'make the path of the soldier before he left Australia as bright and easy as possible'. The first of the Cheer-Up Societies was formed on 5 November 1914 and quickly swung into action.

Alexandrine Seager, who had visited her son in one of the Adelaide camps, set up the first office of the Cheer-Up Society in the Royal Exchange Buildings, King William Street, Adelaide. The first events organised were weekly concerts, and dances and Sunday lunches for the newly enlisted troops. It was a huge success and greatly appreciated and attended by the

soldiers. The public began to send a variety of articles to the soldiers through the Cheer-Up Society and gave donations to assist in the organisations of lunches and events. Many of the helpers in the Society were young women, who gave their time and efforts to organizing functions and mixing with the soldiers. The volunteer women had their own badge of a flag, wattle and trumpet surrounded by the words "Cheer-Up Our Boys Society, Adelaide" and a recognisable white uniform.

Food and money were donated by the society's 10 000 members, particularly from country branches. A musical ensemble, the Burra Cheer-Up Girls' Band, raised funds for the Society and the Murray Bridge Cheer-Ups met troop trains with refreshments.

The young women who joined the Cheer-Ups, as they were known, were of course one of the great attractions for young soldiers but the Society unjustifiably attracted criticism from some morally suspicious members of the public, most of whom could rest assured that they would never have to face the horrors of the war personally. However, the society organisers and volunteers largely dismissed these reproaches; there were bigger issues to be dealt with and as their work increased the societies began to expand and spread.

In the Second World War the Society organised and ran a 'Cheer-Up Hut' near the Adelaide Railway Station. It was more than just a 'hut', having a hostel and a canteen for every day use and social functions. The hut was financed by donations from several charitable organizations including the Country Women's Association. The society was publicly acknowledged as indicative of women's capacity, support and patriotism.

Throughout both world wars the Society volunteers were well aware that many of the young men would not return home or would be physically and mentally scarred by their experiences. Many of them had loved ones who were serving overseas but nevertheless gave considerable time and effort to help those at home. Their influence on the serving men and women was great, most likely greater than they themselves, toiling at home, ever realised.⁷



(Adam-Smith, P, 2014 (1984), *Australian Women at War*, The Five Mile Press, Scoresby)

Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD)

Voluntary Aid Detachments were established during the First World War by members of the Australian Red Cross and the Order of St John. Members received instruction in first aid and home nursing from the St John Ambulance Association. Initially the VADs as they were often referred to, worked without pay in hospitals and convalescent homes alongside doctors and nurses. Recruits were drawn from the local area by invitation from a serving member. During the Second World War VAD members were given more medical training, but they were not fully qualified nurses. VADs worked in convalescent hospitals, on hospital ships and in the blood bank, as well as on the home front.

The Australian Red Cross began organising Voluntary Aid Detachments nation-wide as part of Lady Helen Munro Ferguson's appeal "to the women of Australia" at the onset of the First World War. They soon came to be largely comprised of women. Their scheme followed the policy of the British War Office, and the British Red Cross Society, of which Australia was developing a branch. A number of women had also enrolled in a Voluntary Aid Detachment in 1914 as part of the formation of the New South Wales branch of the British Red Cross Society.

By August 1915, the Australian branch of the British Red Cross reported that Victoria and Tasmania also had Voluntary Aid Detachments. In addition Special Voluntary Aid Detachment Committees had been formed in each State Division, and a Committee of the Central Council had been formed. Recognised by the Military, the Voluntary Aid Detachments were at their peak in World War I and World War II, providing first aid, nursing assistance, comforts, domestic assistance and other supports for returned and wounded soldiers. In between the two World Wars, they continued their care for ex-soldiers and their families, raised funds, and moved into civil hospitals, homes and health associations. In 1928, they became a technical reserve of the Army Medical Corps, administered under the Minister of Defence through a Joint Central Council. After World War II, they extended their civilian service, which included the assistance of new immigrants. In January 1948, direct control of the Voluntary Aid Detachments was returned to the Australian Red Cross and St John Ambulance Society. Yet many Voluntary Aid Detachments folded as time went on, States withdrew from this area, and staff worked in a range of other Australian Red Cross services. In New South Wales, however, the Voluntary Aid Detachments were renamed and revamped as the Voluntary Aid Service Corps in 1967, where they still remain active.⁸

The Roses of No Man's Land – Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS)

The Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) was officially established as a reserve group on 1 July 1902. Prior to Federation a small group of twenty-six nurses were formed into the Australian Nursing Service of New South Wales. With a superintendent, thirteen of these women served with the British Army during the Boer War in South Africa.

The AANS consisted of volunteer civilian nurses who would be available for duty during times of national emergency. Members of the Service served in both the World Wars, staffing medical facilities in Australia and overseas. In 1949 the Service became part of the

Australian Regular Army and is now known as the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC).

Prior to Australia's Federation in 1901, each colony controlled its own defence force, of which the nursing services formed a part. In July 1902 the nursing services of each colony joined together to form the Australian Army Nursing Service.

At the outbreak of the First World War volunteer staff were recruited from both the nursing service and the civilian workforce. They served at field and base hospitals in Australia as well as in the Mediterranean, on hospital and troop ships, Egypt, England, France, Belgium, Greece, Salonika, Palestine, Mesopotamia and India. After the war the Australian Army Nursing Service returned to a reserve status.

The AANS was one of only two women's services (the other being Voluntary Aid Detachments) that were active at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Initially the enlisted nurses were the only females to serve outside Australia. Like their counterparts in the First World War AANS members served overseas in England, Egypt, Palestine, Libya, Greece, Syria, Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island as well as throughout Australia. They also served on hospital ships, troop transports, base and camp hospitals and some spent time in Prisoner of War camps.⁹

Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) – Second World War

From December 1941, when Japan entered the war, Australia's need to build up its armed forces for defence was placed above the needs of other industries. Many men from the agricultural sectors throughout Australia were steadily moving into the armed services and the war industry. While many in the agricultural and primary industry sectors were prevented from joining the armed services as belonging to an essential service there was a growing need for more and more labour to be utilised on farms. Young women were the major source of labour to fill the surfeit of males available to keep rural industries effective in a nation that was at war.

To meet the shortfall in rural labour, State and private women's land organisations were organised, modelled on those established in Great Britain during the First and Second World Wars. A national body was formed on 27 July 1942 under the jurisdiction of the Director General of Manpower. While policy was devised by the Commonwealth Government, the organisation of the AWLA remained State-based. An extensive recruiting campaign was undertaken for new members. Most members of the existing land armies were later incorporated into the AWLA as well.

Patsy Adam-Smith, writing on women's roles in wartime, states that due praises of the members of the AWAS were often overlooked during and after the Second World War:

Working far from the areas where they could parade their uniforms through city streets, they toiled in unglamorous surroundings, at sometimes unpleasant and almost always heavy physical work, usually for longer hours than the 48-hour week then prevailing. Sometimes they lived in large camps in the bush with cooks and often they camped, a few together on the edge of farmlands, and cooked for themselves. They went where they were sent. At their peak enrolment in October 1944, there were

3,068 of these labourers in the field, keeping food up to the vast armies then being provisioned by Australia.¹⁰

AWLA women were generally drawn from city areas and were often unskilled in rural work. This new form of labour had to be heavily promoted to rural employees, who were initially resistant to female labour. Sceptical attitudes, however, generally changed when it was realised that these women were more than capable of working in a traditional male occupation and that they were providing a necessary and vital service to the nation in a time of war. The serving personnel and the population still had to be fed even though the main economic focus of the government was on the war effort.

The AWLA was modelled on similar organisations established in Great Britain during the First and Second World Wars. A national body was formed on 27 July 1942 under the jurisdiction of the Director General of Manpower. While policy was devised by the Commonwealth Government, the organisation of the AWLA remained State-based. An extensive recruiting campaign was undertaken for new members. The women volunteers had to be between the ages of 18 and 50 years and be Australian or British subjects or immigrants from Allied nations. They could join as full time members enrolled for continuous service for 12 months with an option to renew. The alternative was to enrol as an auxiliary member for periods of not less than four weeks on a seasonal basis coinciding with rural operations, for example crop planting and harvesting. The members received a distinctive dress uniform, working clothes and equipment according to their enrolment term and work.

The work consisted of almost every type of task normally done on the land: horticulture, vegetable and fruit growing, livestock raising, dairying, and produce processing. A mobile corps was formed which travelled from district to district and even interstate performing seasonal work. In February 1945, a group of over 300 women from New South Wales were sent to the Riverland area of South Australia (Barmera, Berri, Renmark & Loxton) to pick fruit for the dried fruit harvest. Patsy Adam-Smith writes of these women:

This contingent – the largest to be sent to another stat – included many ‘three-star’ girls with three years’ service. A special train, with a ‘sick bay’ under the supervision of a trained nurse arranged by headquarters, also tea and coffee urns to supply drinks between meals, was provided to take the girls direct to South Australia.

The AWLA was disbanded on 31 December 1945. Their efforts during the Second World War were often overlooked when compared to those who were overseas close to the action. But In 1997, after strong advocacy on their behalf, many members became eligible for the Civilian Service Medal, after a Committee of Enquiry recommendation in 1994.¹¹

Working in the ammunition factories

In 1941 a review of manpower requirements by the War Cabinet identified that 10,000 women would be need for munitions and aircraft production. Most of these women were to be ‘unskilled’ workers drawn from the cities and towns where munitions factories were located. During the Second World War the government built 11 large factories as well as 106 smaller factories and annexes. Major munitions factories were located in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and later during the war smaller factories and annexes were

located in rural towns such as Orange and Hay in New South Wales. In all, over 50,000 people were employed throughout the war in these factories.

Working in munitions factories had its hazards. The most obvious was of course the risk of explosions caused when handling the volatile compounds. The major reactive components handled by workers in these factories was nitro-glycerine, cordite, an explosive compound used in bullets and shells; TNT; tetryl, lead azide, lead styphnate and mercury fulminate all high explosive compounds used in detonators to trigger secondary and larger explosions.

These compounds when handled regularly by the workers as they were often caused serious and long-lasting health effects. Nitro-glycerine absorbed through the skin or inhaled as a dust depressed blood pressure and caused serious headaches; tetryl when in contact with the skin caused severe form of dermatitis; TNT exposure caused liver damage and was sometimes fatal; mercury fulminate was a serious health hazard causing disruption of the nervous system, brain damage, DNA and chromosomal damage, skin rashes, tiredness, headaches and reproductive defects and miscarriages. Although difficult to accurately document the effects of these compounds on the men and women who worked in the munitions factories, it is fairly certain that the effects were significant through their working lives. Many men and women who had worked in the munitions factories would have had chronic, intermittent or late-onset illnesses throughout the rest of their lives leading to their death in some cases.

'Patriotic' Funds – Australian Comforts Fund

Throughout the First and Second World Wars and indeed most other conflicts in which Australia was involved, hundreds of charitable or 'patriotic' fund-raising groups were established at home to assist those who were involved in the conflicts. They ranged from groups who raised funds to buy gifts of food and home-style comforts for those serving overseas, to groups dedicated to specific causes such as the War Horses, and to the people of Belgium who had lost their homes and livelihoods during the fighting. Gifts ranged from motor vehicles, tinned food, cakes and biscuits to hand-knitted socks and scarves. In fact anything that was non-perishable and was deemed to be of some use for those serving overseas was likely to be considered by the patriotic members.

The Australian Comforts Fund was established in August 1916 to co-ordinate the activities of the state based patriotic funds, which were established earlier in World War I. Mainly run by women, they provided and distributed free comforts to the Australian 'fit' fighting men in all the battle zones. They became divisions of the Australian Comforts Fund. The Council of the Fund comprised two delegates from New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland and one from the states of Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. The Executive headquarters was located in Sydney. It ceased operation on 10 April 1920 and was reconstituted in World War II in June 1940 and ceased operation again on 27 June 1946.

The state bodies in World War I were: New South Wales: the 'Citizens' 'War Chest' Fund; Queensland Patriotic Fund; South Australia: League of Loyal Women; Tasmania: 'On Active Service Fund'; Australian Comforts Fund, Victorian Division; Victoria League of Western Australia.

During World War II the state bodies were called: The Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of New South Wales; the Australian Comforts Fund, Victorian Division; the Australian

Comforts Fund, Queensland Division; the Australian Comforts Fund, Tasmanian Division; the Fighting Forces Comforts Fund SA Inc; the Victoria League Camp Comforts Fund. Australian Comforts Fund commissioners conducted its activities in the field, holding honorary rank as officers of the Army or Air Force.¹²

Paramilitary auxiliary and Training Organisations

While many women on the home fronts in times of war readily gave their time in organising and providing aid and care for those serving in the conflicts, other women saw an opportunity to become more involved in the defence of their country. Female paramilitary organisations were instituted in the major capitals of Australia during the Second World War.

The Women's National Emergency Legion (WNEL) was established in Brisbane in 1938 and provided its volunteers with military style uniforms, practiced parade drills and trained in first aid, transport drivers and clerical work. Following the outbreak of the war in the Pacific and the entry of the United States into the conflict the WNEL were attached to US military units and worked as transport drives, administrative duties and coastal observations.

The Legion adopted a system of military ranks under which new recruits were designated privates, members in charge of a training function were lieutenants and the woman in charge of a branch had the title of 'commandant'. From January 1939 the WNEL included an air wing, which provided training in aircraft maintenance. By 1940 the WNEL had 51 branches in rural Queensland as well as a large Branch in Brisbane with around 1,000 women taking part. Following the end of the Second World War the need for the Legion had diminished but it remained active in more peaceful roles until 1947.

Another paramilitary all-women organisation was the Victorian based Militors. This group was formed in Melbourne in August 1940. The women who volunteered for this unit were generally of a younger age, fit and healthy and able to undertake training and discipline. Similar to the Women's National Emergency Legion in Brisbane, the Militors were trained in first aid, military drill, rifle shooting, Morse Code communications, transport driving and other military skills. Training was often done under the supervision of male serving or reserve military personnel. By 1941 the Militors numbered about 300 volunteers. But there was little or no encouragement or support from the Government for the organisation and by December of that year the Militors disbanded.

Militors marching during World War Two (Library of Victoria, ID H98.105/260).



The Rejected

At the start of the First World War the population of Australia was around four million people. Given that the age of men for recruitment was assessed at between 19 and 38 years of age this meant that there was a potential pool of 820,000 men of 'fighting age' (just below 25% of the total population), which could be considered eligible. Throughout both wars, enlistment in the 1st and 2nd Australian Imperial Forces was voluntary. Official recruitment in 1914 began almost immediately after war was declared and there was an immediate rush of young men to the recruitment centres. The army was able to set a high standard in those accepted to serve; a minimum height requirement of 5 feet 6 inches (168 cm), medically and dentally fit, good eyesight and hearing and often preference was given to those who had previous military service in militia units and school brigades. The Australian government wished to send their first commitment of 20,000 as the 'best' examples of Australian males.

By the end of 1914 and well into the following year this meant that thousands of young men in the 'fighting age' were rejected for military service at the recruiting centres. As the course of the war continued and the volunteer numbers began to fall, standards for recruitment were lowered but still there were many young men who were rejected even after several attempts.

Rejection was often hard to take. Some young men stumbled away from the recruitment tables and medical examinations in tears, distraught and embarrassed. Society expected that young men at times of war should be in uniform and those rejected, largely through no fault of their own, were often ostracised and excluded from employment. Many received white feathers in the mail from anonymous senders labelling them as cowards and unpatriotic. To prove their patriotism and to show society that they had indeed tried to enlist, they formed associations, and were able to wear a large badge to show that they

were patriotic and, no doubt in many cases, to cover the perceived shame they felt remaining as civilians.

A Medically unfit badge worn by those who had been rejected for service in the Australian Imperial force.



Internees during both of the World Wars

During the First World War the Australian Government pursued a comprehensive internment policy against those who were seen to be 'enemy aliens' living in Australia.

Initially only those born in countries at war with Australia were classed as enemy aliens, but later this was expanded to include people of enemy nations who were naturalised British subjects, Australian-born descendants of migrants born in enemy nations and others who were thought to pose a threat to Australia's security.

Australia interned almost 7000 people during the First World War of whom about 4500 were enemy aliens and British nationals of German ancestry already resident in Australia.

The internment policy was again instituted by the Australian Government during the Second World War. Three reasons were given:

- to prevent residents from assisting Australia's enemies
- to appease public opinion
- and to house overseas internees sent to Australia for the duration of the war.

Unlike the First World War internment policy, the initial aim of internment during the Second World War was to identify and intern those who posed a particular threat to the safety or defence of the country. As the war progressed, however, this policy changed and Japanese residents were interned en masse. In the later years of the war, Germans and Italians were also interned on the basis of nationality, particularly those living in the north of Australia. In all, just over 20 per cent of all Italians resident in Australia were interned.

Australia interned about 7000 residents, including more than 1500 British nationals, during the Second World War. A further 8000 people were sent to Australia to be interned after being detained overseas by Australia's allies. At its peak in 1942, more than 12,000 people were interned in Australia throughout the camps.¹³

List of Internment and prisoner of war camps in Australia during the First and Second World Wars.

State/Territory	First World War	Second World War
ACT	Molonglo	
Qld	Enoggera (Gaythorne)	Enoggera (Graythorne), Stuart Prison, Thompson's Point
NSW	Berrima, Bourke, Holsworthy, Trial Bay	Cowra, Hay, Holsworthy (Liverpool), Bathurst, Long Bay, Orange, Yanco,
Vic	Langwarrin	Tatura (Rushworth), Dhurringile (near Murchinson), Rushworth, Myrtelford, Graytown POW Camp, Green Mill Temporary Internment Camp, Rowville Internment Camp
Tas	Bruny Island	Brighton
SA	Torrens Island, Fort Largs	Loveday, Sandy Creek, Cook, Gladstone Gaol, Katarapko Wood Camp, Nangwarr Wood Camp, Moorook West Wood Camp, Wandillo, Woolenook Wood Camp
WA	Rottnest Island, Garden Island	Rottnest Island, Parkeston, Harvey Internment Camp, Marrinup POW Camp, No 11 Detention Barracks Fremantle Prison, Jarrahdale POW Camp, North Dandalup Work Camp, Northam POW Camp, Northcliffe POW Camp, Parkeston Transit and Detention Camp, Wem le POW Camp, Woodman Pint Internment Camp

Loveday Internment Camp, South Australia (AWM)



Most internees during both wars were nationals of Australia's main enemy nations already living in Australia. During the First World War Germans made up the majority of internees. During World War, as well as Germans there were also large numbers of Italian and Japanese internees. Internees also included nationals of over 30 other countries, including Finland, Hungary, Portugal and Russia.

Residents of Australia

Not all internees were foreign nationals. Naturalised British subjects and those born in Australia were among those of German, Italian and Japanese origin who were interned. British-born subjects who were members of the radical nationalist organisation, the Australia First Movement, were also interned. An unfortunate result of the internment policy was that in some case Australian born wives and children of men catergorized as enemy aliens were also interred, in some cases as family groups or in other cases separated and placed in different internment camps. Men made up the majority of those interned, but some women and children also spent time in the camps. It would seem in some cases that this was at the decision of bureaucracy rather than the threat that they imposed on Australia's wartime security.

Overseas Internees

Included in the numbers of internees accommodated in Australia were enemy aliens, mostly Germans and Japanese, from Britain, Palestine, Iran, the Straits Settlements (now Singapore and Malaysia), the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia), New Zealand and New Caledonia. Most famous among these groups were the Germans and Italians who arrived on the *Dunera* from England in 1940. The overseas internees included many women and children.

Prisoners of war

During the two World Wars, Australia held both internees and prisoners of war. Prisoners of war were members of enemy military forces who were captured or had surrendered, whereas internees were civilians. Most prisoners of war in Australia were sent from overseas, very few were captured in Australia.

Many records do not make a clear distinction between civilian internees and military prisoners of war. The terms 'prisoner' and 'internee' were often used for both groups. In many cases internees and prisoners of war were accommodated in the same camps. There were differences, however, in the rights of these two groups and the way they could be

treated by Australian authorities. For example, prisoners of war could be made to work while internees could not. Internees also had to be paid for any work they undertook.

Closing the camps

At the end of each war the internment camps were closed down. After the First World War most internees were deported. During the Second World War many internees, particularly Italians, were released before the end of the war after Italy dropped out of the war. Others were allowed to leave the camps after hostilities ceased.

Internees of British or European origin were permitted to remain in Australia after the war, including those who had been brought from overseas by British authorities. Most of those of Japanese origin, however, including some who were Australian-born, were 'repatriated' to Japan in 1946.¹⁴

An Afterword

The above discussions on home front organisations feature the major ones that were present during the 20th Century World War periods. There were other smaller, more local and politically motivated organisations in operation that had limited memberships and limited lifespans and very limited influence on the national war efforts. For many of these there is limited information on their structure, objectives or activities. However, there may be occasions while researching a particular National Trust property where a person may be associated with such an organisation. In such cases these should be incorporated into the story-lines of the property even though the role of the person is uncertain and/or unclear.

This discussion has not concentrated on those men who joined the armed forces. While their roles most certainly should be acknowledged in the property interpretations, their records are readily available through the websites of the National Archives of Australia, the Australian War Memorial and State Libraries. These sources contain official military records and, unit histories and private letters and diaries. Researchers are strongly advised to examine these archival sources when investigating people associated with their National Trust Property. This should be done as a first step in an investigation.

As implied in the introduction, for many of the National Trust residential properties which existed through at least the first half of the 20th Century there is highly likely to be at least some connection between the occupants and the wartime activities whether on active service or on the home front. Where there are, it only remains for them to be found.

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